

Washington, DC – Today the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Legal Timber Protection Act, legislation Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) introduced in March of 2007, as part of the farm bill. The Legal Timber Protection Act, H.R. 1497, passed unanimously out of the Natural Resources Committee in November of last year. The bill bans the trade in illegally harvested timber and wood products and provides the tools to keep illegally harvested timber out of the United States.

“After more than a year of work with an unprecedented coalition of industry, environmental and union groups, today we passed legislation that will help bring an end to the egregious practice of illegal logging,” said Congressman Blumenauer. “Not only does illegal logging threaten some of the world’s richest and most vulnerable forests, but it leads to serious human rights violations. It also costs the U.S. forest products industry over \$1 billion every year, including \$130 - \$150 million to my home state of Oregon. This is a great achievement that will protect the environment, help honest businesses, and prevent rampant corruption both here and abroad.”

The bill’s language was developed through extensive consultation with a broad spectrum of industry representatives, conservation organizations, and government agencies. It amends the 100-year old Lacey Act, which has successfully fought similar problems with fish and wildlife, to ban the importation of illegally-logged wood and wood products from abroad. It authorizes the Justice Department to prosecute timber smugglers.

“EIA commends Congressman Blumenauer’s leadership on this landmark bill to protect the global environment,” said Alexander von Bismarck, Executive Director of the Environmental Investigation Agency—the leading environmental organization providing expertise to policy makers on illegal logging and associated international trade. “Governments, timber companies, and traders around the world are taking note as the largest consumer of wood products, the United States, becomes the first country to ban the import and sale of illegal wood.”

In July, Senator Wyden introduced a complementary bill in the Senate.